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INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 5194
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 2208
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 1572
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0133
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 2416
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ULAANBAATAR 000638

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [MG](#) [CH](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: DALAI LAMA TO VISIT MONGOLIA AUGUST 21-28

REF: A. STATE 134383
[1](#)B. ULAANBAATAR 608
[1](#)C. ULAANBAATAR 385
[1](#)D. 2002 ULAANBAATAR 818

Classified By: Economic/Political Chief Patrick J. Freeman, for reasons
1.4(B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) The Dalai Lama will visit Mongolia August 21-28, at the invitation of the head lama of Gandan Monastery, the leading Tibetan Buddhist monastery in the country. He will transit Japan in both directions, as he did during his last visit in 2002. President Enkhbayar, in his capacity as the chairman of the Mongolian Buddhist Association, will return to Ulaanbaatar from leave on August 23 to meet with him. The Ambassador of India will host a small reception on August 22, which the Ambassador will attend. We have been told that the PRC has protested the visit: late last week, the PRC Vice Foreign Minister called in the Mongolian ambassador to China and the PRC Charge in Ulaanbaatar (the ambassador is out of the country until 8/25 on pre-planned leave) has called on Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials and requested to speak with the President. (Note: The President, who is vacationing in a remote northern province, is not taking any calls. End Note.)

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador met with Foreign Minister Enkhbold on August 17 to deliver the paper conveyed in ref a, which responded to the Foreign Minister's request for U.S. perspectives on the likely Chinese reaction to a Dalai Lama visit (ref b). FM Enkhbold expressed appreciation for the report. Enkhbold indicated that the decision to issue a visa for the visit was not an easy one, and he was visibly worried over what the Chinese reaction might be. He noted that in 2002, the Chinese, citing technical difficulties, had suspended all railroad freight trains (but not passenger trains) at the Mongolian border for nearly 30 hours, impeding food and other imports and causing serious economic loss to Mongolia (ref d). Enkhbold noted that in a March 2006 speech (on the anniversary of the Tibetan uprising), the Dalai Lama had made very clear that he sought greater self-rule and autonomy -- not independence -- for Tibet. Enkhbold said he hoped that Beijing would moderate its reaction to the visit, in light of the Dalai Lama's stated position.

[1](#)3. (C) The Foreign Minister commented that, in view of an expected negative Chinese reaction, he was still struggling with how to explain the decision to all Mongolian constituencies, such as business interests who may be negatively affected. He said that the decision is not even without controversy in Mongolian Buddhist circles, since the Bogd Gegen (Rinpoche), not the Dalai Lama, is regarded by many Mongolians to be the head of Mongolian Buddhism.

¶4. (C) Enkhbold asked how the U.S. would respond in the event of Chinese pressure on Mongolia, such as a repetition of the train service interruption in 2002. Ambassador responded that the U.S. likely would reiterate publicly our belief that the Dalai Lama is an internationally recognized religious leader who should be allowed freedom to travel where he wished, including Mongolia where the majority of the population is Tibetan Buddhist. Such statements would be unlikely to deter any Chinese pressure -- and any effort at direct U.S. intervention with Chinese leaders would probably worsen matters, not help them.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Thus far, China's reaction has been limited to official protests in an attempt to deter a visit altogether. They may well escalate the reaction and seek to punish Mongolia, at they did in 2002. One could make an argument that in 2006 China has more vested interests -- particularly economic -- in maintaining good neighborly relations with Mongolia. Several months after the last visit of the Dalai Lama in November 2002, relations had recovered sufficiently for Hu Jintao to visit Ulaanbaatar, which may be a history that comforts Mongolian leaders as they await China's response.
SLUTZ